DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 258 141 CS 008 048

AUTHOR Grubaugh, Steven
TITLE Personalized Vocabulary Development for College Students.
PUB DATE 84
NOTE 7p.; "Forum for Reading" is the journal of the College Reading Improvement Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
JOURNAL CIT Forum for Reading; v16 n1 p26-30 Fall-Win 1984

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS English Instruction; Higher Education; Reading Instruction; *Teaching Methods; *Vocabulary Development; *Vocabulary Skills

ABSTRACT

Spoken Words, a modified language experience approach to the study of vocabulary, offers college instructors an opportunity to individualize vocabulary instruction and to demonstrate a variety of the most powerful vocabulary learning strategies in a natural language setting. To implement Spoken Words, the teacher must first model the procedure by writing a target word on the chalkboard and then use the meaning of the word in an anecdote. Next the students are required to select words to learn from their listening or reading vocabularies. Then, they are to speculate on the word's meaning or to ask someone to define the word adequately. After verifying these definitions, students are to develop a story built around the concept of the word and present it to the class. A unique feature of this approach is that the instructor may present many strategies for deriving word meanings for unknown words. Students are requested to demonstrate mastery of the most utilitarian of the words they had selected by writing a definition or a synonym or by providing an associative word, as well as composing a sentence using the word. (EL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED258141

Personalized Vocabulary Development for College Students

Steven Grubaugh

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Rona F. Flippo

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS208048

Personalized vocabulary development for college students

Steven Grubaugh
University of New Orleans
New Orleans, Louisiana

Few would argue the fact that vocabulary development is an important part of a college education, for the knowledge of words is highly correlated with thinking ability (Vygotsky, 1934), scores on intelligence tests (Terman, 1916), expressing thought through speech (Fromkin and Rodman, 1974) and reading comprehensive (Davis, 1968). Therefore, a college student's improved ability to understand and manipulate words in the college classroom can increase the individual's capacity to learn from text and lecture, as well as improve the potential to communicate thoughts to others.

With this rationale, many remedial and developmental college skills classes include vocabulary instruction in their course curriculum (Ahrendt, 1975; Biggs, 1982). In these courses, there is a deliberate effort to teach the many word-learning strategies that can help students become better wordsmiths and to help students develop a good attitude toward continued lifelong word acquisition.

Spoken Words, a modified language experience approach to the study of vocabulary words, offers college instructors an opportunity to individualize vocabulary instruction, and a chance to effectively demonstrate a variety of the most powerful vocabulary learning strategies in a natural language setting. The method is described herein.

The Teacher as a Model for Word Learning

To implement Spoken Words in the college classroom, the teacher must first model the procedure: Standing before the class, the teacher writes the target vocabulary word on the chalkboard. The teacher explains that even though target words should be unknown to students, they should be chosen from each individual's language environment—that is, each target word should have been previously heard or read before, thus giving it a greater chance of appearing again and being more relevant to the learner by virtue of repeated exposures.

The instructor must then tell a story or anecdote using the meaning of the word as the basis for the story to be told.

As an example of the Spoken Word presentation, the teacher might tell a story like the one that follows. "The word on the board is *intrepid*. I heard it on a *Star Trek* rerun last week. Captain Kirk's ship, Enterprise, was forced to signal for help to her sister ship, *Intrepid*. *Intrepid* means courageous and I want to tell you a story about an *intrepid* educator, Dr. William Sand, with whom I studied. I was taking a Piaget workshop which Dr. Sand offered in the summer. When he walked into the class, the first day, he looked terrible. Dr. Sand, as most everyone knew, had leukemia, but it had been in remission for years, so to see him with his hair thinning all over and his face covered with large purple blotches was a shock. His clothes hung on his shrunken frame making him appear to be wearing his big brother's suitcoat. Dr. Sand walked right up to the podium and said, 'Well, good morning! You're all wondering why my hair is thin, my face covered with spots, and my clothes seem a little large on me. I'll satisfy your curiosity. I have had leukemia for several years, which has just come back out of remission. The splotches on my face are

where the blood capillaries have burst beneath the skin, and my thin hair and reduced weight are a result of the chemotherapy which I must undergo daily. But, now,' said Sand in a businesslike tone, 'you must learn about Piaget.'

"For the next two weeks, we did learn Piaget! Dr. Sand had studied with the master psychologist for two years in Geneva and had even written a book for educators. Sand's lessons were excellent, but by the end of each day, his fatique was obvious and he had to turn the class over to one of his assistants.

"The final week of workshop, Dr. Sand came to class with gauze stuffed up his nostrils with a piece of tape used to hold the bandages in place. Speaking with a nasal quality to his voice, he said 'Good morning! You're all probably wondering why I have gauze stuffed up my nose today. I'll answer that. My blood is not coagulating, and this bandage absorbs the blood which tends to drip. But, now, more Piaget. The formal stage of development is preceeded by the concrete operational stage...' and he continued to teach us masterfully that week except for more frequent breaks for rest.

"Dr. Sand died in his hospital bed the weekend following our workshop. As a teacher myself, I'll always remember that Dr. Sand taught us well, and despite his pain and personal discomfort, he continued to do what he did well. Dr. Sand lives in my mind as an *intrepid* educator, and his courage and spirit of dedication will continue to inspire me as I teach."

The Assignment

After several demonstrations by the instructor, the students should be required to self-select X number of words from their listening or reading vocabularies each week. As the noted authority on vocabulary learning, Edgar Dale, suggests these words should have been seen or heard before, and be challenging to learn, hence, useful to the learner (Dale, O'Rourke and Bamman, 1971). The students must then determine the definition of their target words by speculating on the word's meaning in context or conducting word interviews. The word interview is a process where the student asks some respected other, like a peer or an instructor, to adequately define the word. This live explanation allows the student to interact with the definition, and pinpoint the word's meaning by asking for examples and other clarifying information. This interactive process, according to Lockhart, Craik & Jacoby (1970) will forge a deeper semantic memory trace for the word. Of course, students verify these definitions with a dictionary, and then strive to develop a story or anecdote which is built around the concept of the word. The story can be either from real life experience, like the story about Dr. Sand, or from a book, song, film, or other vicarious experience. However, the stories should not be invented, nor should students be allowed to find a word to fit a story to fulfill the requirements of this activity. The student's final step in the Spoken Word process is to prepare the story for presentation to the class, making sure to use the word in strong context as the story is told.

The Teacher as Speech Coach and Vocabulary Strategist

Before the Spoken Word presentations begin, the instructor should work with the class to prepare them as listeners. Empathy for each person who goes before the class can be built by reminding the group that each of them will be participants in the activity. This reminder should help those students who are inordinately shy to feel comfortable and

safe speaking in front of class.

Students can be called upon to make their presentations by asking for volunteers, or selecting names at random from the grade book. Waiting to make a presentation to a group often produces anxiety, so allowing volunteers to go first permits those who wish to complete their obligation as soon as possible to do so. However, using a random selection process to select students for presentations is advantageous in that it keeps a slight edge of tension to perform in the group and helps center audience attention upon the presentations. Students suddenly develop more empathy for a peer who is presenting when they realize that they could be next.

The instructor should *critique* the Spoken Word presentations. Words written on the board should be checked for spelling accuracy and be pronounced correctly. After coaching a few students on their word self-selection process, students will begin to choose words which are challenging and relevant to their work and their lives.

One unique feature of the Spoken Words' approach to vocabulary learning is that the instructor has a chance to demonstrate the many strategies for deriving word meaning for unknown words as they occur in each student's presentation. Each vocabulary strategy should be pretaught formally so students are familiar with them. The strategies can be demonstrated when needed as occasions arise in the student presentations. For instance, if the word *prestidigitator* is presented, the instructor could help students see the parts *presti*, *digit*, and *tor*, and by using structural analysis, could attempt to derive the meaning "one who is fast with the fingers," or "magician." A strategy for using context is to have each speaker eliminate the words's definition, and persuade the class, with the teacher's help, to guess at the word meaning by using context clues (see Quealy, 1969; Roe, Stoodt & Burns, 1978). The teacher could also use oral modified cloze activities to help students inflect the target word through tense, number, possession and mood (Montgomery & Straton, 1981; Pearson & Johnson, 1978).

Another vocabulary strategy could be introduced if the word *carrion* were presented. The teacher would have the opportunity to demonstrate the power of connotation and denotation by asking if students would rather eat *carrion*, or tenderloin steak. The semanticist, S.I. Hayakawa (1972) suggests that students examine the way words represent referents, and the way words make people feel. Other vocabulary strategies such as using the dictionary, the thesaurus, and research tools, as well as showing words as they relate to each other in various categorical listings, searching for word etymologies and histories, exploring compound words like *clearinghouse* and derived words like *metamorphosis*, and words with multiple meanings like *morgue*, will provide students with valuable demonstrations of the various vocabulary strategies and how they work.

The teacher can also coach the speaking delivery of each student's Spoken Word. *General guidelines* to speaking can be presented before the assignment begins (see Linver, 1983). Then, specific tips can be given to individuals after class, especially if it is suspected that the speaker would be sensitive to criticism adminstered in class.

Beyond the role of guide, coach, teacher and critic, the instructor must manage the Spoken Words presentations like a good host. A "down-to-business" like attitude with a steady pace through the activity must be maintained to make good use of classroom time and to quickly demonstrate the various vocabulary strategies to students. The instruc-

for will have to cut short any stories which might offend others in class, and solicit vocabulary strategies or related comments from the class which would help with instruction.

Testing Mastery of Self-selected Words

Since Spoken Words is a totally individualized vocabulary method, it is necessary to test in an individualized fashion, but to utilize a testing method which does not overburden the teacher. After the students have accumulated 20-30 words, a vocabulary test may be given, perhaps in tandum with another test. To examine students on their self-selected vocabulary words, the teacher goes to each student and checks off five words on a sheet of paper upon which the student has written only the self-selected words. Considering the verbal skills of the student, the teacher should critique the word list so that the student understands that the activity is meant to promote personalized vocabulary development which is challenging to each individual. To examine students on words which have been presented to the entire class by other students, the teacher earmarks the best, or most utilitarian of these words, and allows students to study or review these chosen words from their own notes taken during the presentations. Thus, this selection process effectively checks, or audits a fair percentage of the self-selected words or Spoken Words presented in class. Students are then required to demonstrate their mastery of each word.

To demonstrate their mastery of each word, students must, in order of preference 1) write a definition, 2) write a synonym, or 3) provide an associative word. Students should write "no response" if they cannot otherwise respond to the word. Then they must compose a sentence using each word in a suitable context. Such assessment not only gives the teacher a good idea of how well the concept of the target word is understood, but also provides insight into each student's ability to manipulate these words as they would be used in real life language situations.

The ultimate goal of the Spoken Words process is to help students become independent word learners. In Spoken Words students are trained to watch and listen to language for useful words which occur with frequency. They must define the words interactively through word interviews, and use the dictionary to check the formal meanings. They must develop a story which is itself an example of the concept of the word, then present it to the class in context. Students are critiqued on their speaking techniques and encouraged to try some of the many vocabulary strategies for guessing the meanings of unknown words in class. Students are accountable for mastering the words they themselves have chosen, as well as the most useful words presented by their peers. They are tested on knowing word definitions as well as actual usage of the word.

Affectively, the Spoken Words format offers a chance for teacher and students to become better acquainted as their words and stories reveal slice-of-life experiences. Spoken Words will generate its own momentum as teacher and students contribute to a learning climate where quality exposure to vocabulary concepts is relevant, enjoyable, and valued by all.

References

Ahrendt, K.M. (1975). *Community College Reading Programs*. Newark: International Reading Association.

Biggs, S.A. (1982). College Reading and Study Courses: A Sound Investment? In R. Flippo (Ed.), *Innovative Learning Strategies* (22-31). Newark: International Reading Association.

Dale, E., O'Rourke, J., & Bamman, H.A. (1971). *Techniques of Teaching Vocabulary*. Menlo Park: The Benjamin/Cummings Publishing Company.

Davis, F.B. (1968). Research in Comprehension in Reading. *Reading Research Quarterly, 3*, 499-545.

Fromkin, V., & Rodman, R. (1974). *An Introduction to Language*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

Hayakawa, S. (1972). *Language in Thought and Action*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc.

Linver, S. (1983.) *Speak and Get Results*. New York: Summit Books.

Lockhart, R.S., Craik, F.M., & Jacoby, L. (1976). Depth of Processing, Recognition and Recall. In J. Brown (Ed.) *Recall and Recognition*. London: Wiley Publishing.

Montgomery, M., & Stratton, J. (1981). *The Writer's Hotline Handbook*. New York: New American Library.

Pearson, D.P. & Johnson, D.D. (1978). *Teaching Reading Vocabulary*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Quealy, R.J. (1969). Senior High School Students Use of Contextual Aids in Reading. *Reading Research Quarterly, 4*, 512-533.

Roe, B., Stoodt, B., & Burns, P. (1978). *Reading Instruction in the Secondary Schools*. Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Co.

Terman, L.M. (1916). *The Measurement of Intelligence*. Cambridge: The Riverside Press.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1934). *Thought and Language*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.